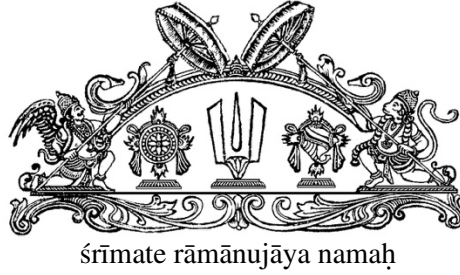


PURUṢA SŪKTAM

WITH COMMENTARY





Puruṣa Sūkta & Commentary

Introduction

The Puruṣa Sūkta is considered to be the quintessential hymn of the Vedas. It is found in all the four Vedas with slight variations. The Mudgala Upaniṣad gives a nice summary of this hymn. It is said that if one does not have the ability or facility to study the entire Veda then one should study only this Sūkta and one would thus obtain the benefit of studying all the four Vedas.

This text is the most commonly used text of the entire Veda and is chanted in almost every Hindu religious ceremony from birth to death. The subject of this Sūkta is the Supreme Being – Puruṣa, and the emanation of the universe.

Puruṣa commonly is taken to mean “man” or “person”, and by extension it can mean any human being. However in the Vedic literature it is applied to the Godhead. The word is derived from the root *pr* = ‘to protect’ or ‘to fill up’. The term *puruṣa* therefore means that principle, power or force which fills the entire universe and protects it or maintains it. If the term is broken up into *pura* and *śa* it means – “that which lies within the citadel (of the body)” and refers to the *jivātman*.

The Ultimate Reality is also known as *Brahman* = the Immensity, *ādi-puruṣa* = the Primeval Being, *Parameśvara* = the Supreme Lord, *Nārāyaṇa* = the Ground of Being, and *Bhagavān* = the One endowed with infinitely great qualities.

In this Sūkta, the Puruṣa is conceived of in three modes:–

- (1) The Supreme Being,
- (2) The individual ātma
- (3) The social or universal entity – collective jivātman.

śarīra-śarīri sambandha

According to the teachings of Viśiṣṭhadvaita Vedānta (Qualified Non-dualism) there are three ultimate realities. The Supreme Being (*Brahman* or *paramātmā*), the individual Self (*jivātma*) and the Universe (*jagat*). The individual jivas and the universe are related to the Supreme Being as the body is to the Self.

Just as the body is pervaded by the individual Self, all the universe and all Selves are pervaded by the Divine Nature. This clarifies that the relationship between the Self and its body or between the Godhead and the universe is intimate and co-dependant, unlike the relationship between a person and his property which is purely superficial and one-sided.

Metamorphosis of the Absolute

According to the Upaniṣad world view – the creative process is one of emanation from the subtle, transcendent unmanifest state of matter (noumena) to the gross, material world (phenomena). In this process the Supreme Being who is the only reality underlying all existence, takes three forms. As the transcendent Supreme Godhead, Puruṣa is known as the *Paramātmā* or *Īśvara*. When He causes the projection of the universe through the agency of Brahmā (the Creator) and is identified with the subtle-body or *sūkṣma śarīra* of the universe He is known as *Hiraṇya-garbha*. When Puruṣa “becomes” the material universe which is His gross physical body – He is known as *Virāṭ*.

The metaphysical principle to be kept in mind when studying this text is *yathā brahma-aṇḍa tathā piṇḍa-aṇḍa* – “as above so below” – the microcosm is a counterpart of the macrocosm. The emanation and evolution of the material universe has its parallel in the evolution of the individual.

Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad says that Brahman is *catus-pāt*, four-footed, and its four principles are Brahman, Īśvara, Hiraṇya-garbha and Virāṭ.

Metaphysical Correspondences

| Macrocosm (Brahmāṇḍa) | | | Microcosm (Piṇḍāṇḍa) | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|---|----------------------|-------------|
| <i>Brahman</i> | Absolute | <i>turīya</i> | the Essential Self | | ātma |
| <i>īśvara</i> | Creative force | <i>prajāña</i> | experiencer of the unmanifested objectivity | <i>kāraṇa-śarīra</i> | Causal Body |
| <i>Hiraṇya-garbha</i> | Life-force | <i>taijasa</i> | the experiencer of the subtle | <i>sūkṣma-śarīra</i> | Subtle Body |
| <i>virāṭ</i> | World | <i>viśva</i> | the experiencer of gross things | <i>sthūla-śarīra</i> | Gross Body |

śānti pāṭh

tacchaṁyor āvṛṇīmahe | gātuṁ yajñāya | gātuṁ yajña-pataye | daivīs-svastir astu
naḥ | svastir mānuṣebhyaḥ | ūrdhvaṁ jigātu bheṣajam | śaṁ no astu dvipade | śaṁ
catuṣpade | om śāntiś śāntiś śāntiḥ ||

We worship the Supreme Being for the welfare of all. May all miseries and shortcomings leave us forever so that we may always chant in the sacrifices and for the Lord of Sacrifices. May the medicinal herbs grow in potency, so that diseases can be cured effectively. May the devas grant us peace. May all human beings be happy, may all the birds and the beasts also be happy. Om Peace Peace Peace.

Mantra 1

om sahasra śīrṣā puruṣaḥ | sahasrākṣaḥ sahasra pāt |
sa bhūmim viśvato vṛtvā | atya-tiṣṭhad daśāṅgulam ||

sahasra = thousand, *śīrṣā* = heads, *puruṣaḥ* = Supreme Being, *sahasra* = thousand, *ākṣaḥ* = eye, *sahasra* = thousand, *pāt* = foot, *saḥ* = he, *bhūmim* = the earth, *viśvataḥ* = completely, *vṛtvā* = having covered, *ati* = more, extended, *tiṣṭhat* = existed, stood, *daśa* = ten, *āṅgulam* = finger, inches.

1. The Supreme Being has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. Pervading the cosmos in its entirety, He transcends it by ten fingers beyond.

Commentary

The words ‘hundreds’ and ‘thousands’ are used metaphorically to denote that the Supreme Being has innumerable heads, eyes, feet etc. According to Etymology (Nirukta), *śīrṣa* (head) is indicative of the mind, thus by describing the Puruṣa as having thousands of heads means that the Supreme Being has omniscience or unlimited power of knowledge, “eyes” indicates powers of perception and “feet” power of motion or presence, thus the Supreme Being has unlimited powers of knowledge, perception and action.

The Gita states 13 – 14; "With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere, He exists in the world, enveloping all".

The second line of the mantra identifies the dual nature of the Supreme Being;

1. As the immanent Inner Ruler of all beings which constitute His various bodies. All their innumerable sense organs can be said to be His own, as the Lord enjoys the world through the *jīvas*. He is also known as *Hṛṣikeśa* – One-who-controls-the-sense-organs-of-all. He perceives and experiences the world through the senses of all beings.
2. As the transcendent Supreme Being, through reference to His Cosmic Form (*Viśvarūpa*). This Cosmic Form is described in detail in the Bhagavad Gita and mentioned in other Vedic texts like the Subala and Śvetaśvatāra Upaniṣad, and the Arunaketuka.

The Pervasion by the Supreme

The all-pervasive nature of the Supreme Being described in this mantra is confirmed by the etymological meaning of His three principle names — *Viṣṇu*, *Vāsudeva* and *Nārāyaṇa*.

1. **Viṣṇu** indicates external pervasion – the entire universe exists within the Supreme Being.

2. **Vāsudeva** indicates internal pervasion – all beings both sentient and insentient are pervaded within by the Supreme Being.
3. **Nārāyaṇa** means the abode or source or repository of all Jivas – the “ground” of being.

Daśāṅgulam — means multiplied by ten. The Vishnu Purana 2-7-22-28 states that the 14 worlds constitute an *aṅḍa* or a 'Cosmic Egg' and that there are innumerable such 'Cosmic Eggs' or Galaxies — each one is enveloped by *āpa* (water), *tejas* (fire/energy), *vāyu*, (wind) *ākāśa* (space), *tāmasa* (darkness = ignorance) *ahaṁkāra* (ego-sense) and *mahat* (Cosmic intelligence). Each one of these being ten times the size of its immediate predecessor. It is thus understood that the Supreme Being transcends all the cosmos.

Daśa – also means “endless” and *angula* from the root *agi* signifies “edge” or a *yojana* (9 miles) so this also means endless yojanas.

RV. 10.10.1 Va.Sam. 31.1 Sama Veda. 6.4.3. Sa.Br. 13.6.2.12.

Mantra 2

puruṣa evedaṁ sarvaṁ | yad bhūtaṁ yac ca bhavyam |
utāmṛtatva syeśānaḥ | yad annenāti-rohati ||

puruṣaḥ = Supreme Being, *eva* = indeed, *idam* = this, *sarvaṁ* = all, *yac* = whatever, *bhūtaṁ* = has been, *yac*, = whatever, *ca* = and, *bhavyam* = shall be, *uta* = indeed, *amṛtatvasya* = of immortality, *iśānaḥ* = the Lord, *yad* = that, *annena* = by sustentation, *ati* = greater, beyond, *rohati* = grows.

2. The Supreme Being indeed is all this, what has been and what yet shall be. It is He who confers on all immortality by which alone they live.

Commentary

The first mantra declared that the Puruṣa is all pervading and is devoid of all limitations of space. This mantra now confirms that He is also devoid of all limitations of time. He is present at all times and in all things. His omnipresence is not like that of space which is everywhere at all times as an impersonal spatial extent, but the Supreme Lord is omnipresent as the inner Ruler (*antaryāmin*) possessing all sentient and non-sentient entities as His "bodies". He is also present within each and every atom. Hence the second line of the mantra also adds that He is the Lord of Immortality — in other words He alone is capable of removing the suffering of repeated transmigration (*samsāra*) and bestowing immortality (*amṛtatva*, *mokṣa*, *nirvāna*).

The second line of the mantra alludes to the universal redeeming grace of the Lord. The Supreme Being, though immutable, out of compassion and in order to provide an opportunity for erring beings to redeem themselves, transforms Himself into the world. The Supreme Being is the Totality-of-Being – the Matrix.

During the intervening period between Universal Dissolution (*laya*) and Re-projection of the Universe (*śṛṣṭi*) He holds within Himself the dormant jivas and the material substance of the Universe.

The doctrine that all the sentient jivas and the material cause of the universe are held latently within the Supreme Lord during the intervening period between the absorption and projection,

and are transformed into the manifest universe, is the link between the two *statements* that “All this is the Puruṣa only” and “He is the Lord bestowing immortality”.

annena — (by food) The Veda states that all beings are born through food, live by food and ultimately return to being food for some other entity (Taittiriya Up. II.2.1.) The concept of 'food' can therefore be applied to the 'ground-of-all-being'. Another interpretation is that the term 'food' refers to all the objects apprehended by the senses – because they are the objects upon which the senses depend and the purpose for which they exist. All aims of human aspiration can be assumed into the categories (*puruṣārthas*) of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*.

1. **Dharma** refers to one’s moral and ethical sphere of activity — including all duties relating to learning, charity, compassion, as well as one’s profession duties and social obligations etc.
2. **Artha** refers to material gain and prosperity,
3. **Kāma** refers to reproduction, pleasure and sensual enjoyment,
4. **Mokṣa** refers to freedom, emancipation or liberation from the cycle of rebirths.

Vedānta Desika divides these four categories of human aspiration into two – *trivarga* = *dharma*, *artha* & *kāma*; and *apavarga* = *mokṣa* (liberation). The first three are the subject of human endeavour whereas Liberation (immortality) comes from the Lord.

nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo ne medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yamevaiṣa vṛṇute, tena labhyas tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām

The Supreme Godhead cannot be attained by listening to discourses, by sacrifices, or by the study of Scripture. He can be obtained only by one whom the Supreme Being Himself chooses out of His own prerogative alone. To such a blessed one the Lord reveals His Transcendental Manifestation.

Katha Upaniṣad 1.2.23

Mantra 3

etāvān asya mahimā | ato jyāyānś ca pūruṣaḥ |
pādo’sya viśvā bhūtāni | tripād asyāmṛtaṁ divi ||

etāvān = this much, *asya* = of this, *mahimā* = greatness, *ataḥ* = than this, *jyāyān* = greater, *ca* = and, *pūruṣaḥ* = Supreme Being, *pādaḥ* = a quarter, *asya* = of this, *viśvā* = universe, totality, all, *bhūtāni* = beings, *tripād* = three quarters, *asya* = of this, *amṛtaṁ* = immortal, *divi* = in space.

3. So mighty is His grandeur, yea greater than all this is the Supreme Being. All beings comprise only one fourth of Him, three fourths is immortal beyond.

Commentary

viṣṭabhyāham-idaṁ kṛtsnam ekānśena sthito jagat (Gita 10:42)

I abide, sustaining this whole universe with but a fraction of Myself.

The entire knowable Universe is described as only a quarter of His measureless potency. The Supreme Being is vastly greater than the whole cosmos. The Taittiriya Up. states in 2-4-1 that mind and speech recoil from its ineffable greatness. (*yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*) and the Svetasvatara Up. 6-8 declares that there is none equal or higher than Him (*na tat samaścāpyadhikaśca dṛśyate*).

All the descriptions of the Lord pervading time and space and granting liberation etc. are mentioned only to give some concept of His greatness, but in fact the Lord transcends all possible description. (This mantra # 3 is also found in the Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad 3-12-6.)

jjāyan — means the foremost, greater than anything else. The Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad 3-14-3 uses this same word to describe the Supreme Being as being greater than the earth, the heaven and all the galaxies.

The Vaishnava acharyas take this verse as referring to the four-fold *Vyūha* form of the Puruṣa — Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The Supreme Lord is of one essence or substance but in relationship to the cosmos and its dynamic flow, has four emanations or ‘expressions’, known in theological terms as ‘hypostatic emanations’.

In order to understand this concept we can use the allegory of the mind and mental compartments. The mind together with all its mental and emotional processes is indivisible, but in all the various activities of daily living – our work, recreation, hobbies and emotions we use different compartments and distinct mental faculties – and so it is with the Supreme being.

The first three of these Vyūhas or hypostatic emanations manifest in the unchanging, pure and transcendental spiritual realm called *tripāda vibhūti*. The last of the Vyūhas — Aniruddha, is the Manifestor and the Controller of the material universe of sentient and non-sentient entities which is subjected to change. This world in which we live is known as *līla vibhūti*.

From the totality of the perfect being of Puruṣa, these four “emanations” proceed. The operative word being; *proceed* – one does not create the other. Each emanation proceeds from the one before, just as a series of candles are lit, one from the other. Another example would be the modern multi-media montage technique where one person is transformed into another using the facial features of the previous person. They are not four separate entities but are forms assumed by the one Supreme Being for the purpose of the cosmic functions of projecting, maintaining and withdrawing the Universe.

Cosmic projection in Vedānta is viewed as cyclic and not linear as in the Abrahamic Religions. The basic components of Universal Matter — the atoms, are eternal and are constantly forming compounds and again dissolving. When this process applies to the Universe as a whole it is termed as *sṛṣṭhi* (projection/evolution) and *pralaya* (dissolution/ involution). This cycle is perpetual and continues forever comprising a “pulsating” Universe.

The term ‘*vyūha*’ literally means “splitting” and refers to the splitting of the 6 essential attributes of the Lord into three pairs of *Guṇas*. This can be likened to the process of mitosis by which cells undergo multiplication by a special process of self-division. This means that each of the Emanations has two particular qualities which are active and the other four remaining dormant.

Each of these Vyūhas has two functions; a cosmic creative one, and a moral one. The creative function is connected with the origination of beings (ontology) and the moral function is connected with their ethical and spiritual progress in the world.

The creative activities of the Vyūhas come into play one after the other, thus marking out three successive stages in the process of evolution of the Universe. In the pre-creational phase, the duality of all material matter and conscious Selves exist in a state of undifferentiated unity like the presence of curds and whey in milk. Everything is absorbed and dissolved at the end

of a cycle, into the Godhead which alone remains. The sentient Selves and insentient matter exist in a unity with the Godhead but remain individually separate.

In Mythological terms the Lord Nārāyaṇa (The Ground-of-Being) lies upon the couch of eternity; represented by the thousand headed snake Ananta, floating on the ocean of Milk (Undifferentiated Unity) – the original state of matter in its potential form. The Lord mythologically contains the entire universe within His belly.

Description of the Vyūhas and the stages of Cosmic Evolution

Sankarshana – with this Vyūha the entire future universe comprised of consciousness (spirit or *puruṣa*) and matter (*prakṛti*) is compressed into a tiny singularity (*bindu*) without internal distinctions. It is in a state of ‘potentiality’ and the attribute (*guṇa*) concerned with developing this potential is **bala** (omnipotence).

Pradyumna — with this Vyūha the compressed embryonic mass of the Universe bursts forth into a duality consisting of Spirit/Subject (*Puruṣa*) and Matter/Object (*Prakṛti*). The attribute which is involved in this separation is **aiśvarya** (Absolute Independence) Pradyumna in turn, causes the manifestation of three things;-

1. the 'group Self' (*mānava sarga*) — all the individual Selves or jīvas exist together in a conglomeration known as the *puruṣa* or *hiraṇya-garbha*.
2. Primordial Matter (*pradhāna* or *prakṛti*) the basic pre-molecular substance from which the universe is created.
3. Subtle Time (*kāla*) which is the potency of change before it becomes divided into the measurements of gross time consisting of years, seasons, months, weeks, days etc. which are determined by the movements of the spheres.

Aniruddha — by the means of the attribute called **śakti** (energy), Aniruddha causes the evolution of the gross atoms out of the Primordial Matter (*pradhāna*) and the development of gross time from subtle time. Thus the evolution of Matter and Spirit under the influence of Time, produces the Mixed Creation (*miśra-sṛṣṭhi*) during which the pre-existent Selves become differentiated. Aniruddha becomes the ruler of the various galaxies and their contents. From Aniruddha emanate Brahma and Siva — personifications of his Grace and Wrath.

Tripāda vibhūti also refers to *Parama-pada* (Vaikuṇṭha) — the Supreme “unimpeded” State.

Mantra 4

tripād ūrdhva udait puruṣaḥ | pādo'syehā'bhavāt punaḥ |
tato viśvaṅ vyakrāmat | sāsānāśane abhi ||

tripāt = three quarters, *ūrdhvaḥ* = upwards, *uta* = moreover, *et* = arose, *puruṣaḥ* = Supreme Being, *pādaḥ* = one quarter, *asya* = of this, *iha* = here, *abhavat* = became, *punaḥ* = again, *tataḥ* = thence, *viśvaṅ* = in all directions, *vi* = participle signifying separation, *akrāmat* = spread, *sāsāna* = what eats, animate, *āśane* = in what does not eat, inanimate, *abhi* = participle goes with *vi*.

4. With three quarters the Supreme Being rose up; one quarter again remained here. Thence on every side He pervaded the universe, which consists of sentient and insentient entities.

Commentary

With three fourths the Supreme Being rose up; – The Scriptures are unable to adequately describe and praise the Lord in His first three hypostatic emanations, they therefore turn to Aniruddha – who remains lying on the Ocean-of-milk in yogic trance, (*kṣīrābdaśāyi*) mindful of the welfare of all beings, and is pervading the entire universe.

śāsana = "eating" – means sentient beings; those engaged in consumption and other activities and subject to growth, birth, decay and death.

anāśana = means insentient entities; those which do not eat through mastication such as plants. Hence it is to be understood that through His mental activity or *saṁkalpa*, the Lord caused the creation of *Prakṛti* (matter) and *Puruṣa* (Spirit, individual Selves) and through them, expanded the creation of movable and immovable beings.

According to the principle of logic known as *sarva-śākha-pratyaya-nyāya*, all the Vedic texts on a given topic must be taken together and construed accordingly.

In the Tattiriya Upaniṣad and the Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad, the Supreme Being is said to have willed the creation; – "*eko 'ham bahu syām*" – "I am One! let Me become the many".

Mantra 5

tasmad virāḍ ajāyata | virājo adhi puruṣaḥ |
sa jāto atyaricyata | paścād bhūmim atho puraḥ ||

tasmād = from Him, *virāḍ* = Primordial nature or prakṛti, *ajāyata* = was born, *virājaḥ* = from Virat, *adhi puruṣaḥ* = the secondary Being, *sa* = he, *jātaḥ* = being born, *ati- aricyata* = reached, extended. *paścāt* = behind, *bhūmim* = the earth, *athaḥ* = and from this, *puraḥ* = in front.

5. From Him (*Adi-puruṣa* = the Primordial Being) was born *Virāḍ*, again from *Virāḍ* emerged the secondary being (*Adhi-puruṣa* = Immense Being). When born he spread to the east and west, beyond the boundaries of the Universe.

Commentary

Creation proceeds in two stages *samaṣṭi* (cosmic evolution) and *vyāṣṭi* (individual creation).

Primary Evolution — samaṣṭi sṛṣṭi (Cosmic Evolution)

The Virāḍ

Cosmic evolution requires two fundamentals: matter (*Prakṛti*) and consciousness (*Puruṣa*).

From himself Ādi-Puruṣa projects what is called the *Virāḍ* – which means "Shining Forth". It is the totality of every conceivable thing in the universe in its potential or latent form. *Puruṣa* then enters into it and projects the devas or the 'radiant ones', the gods, who then continue the work of actively evolving the secondary evolution as authorised and directed by him. He also manifests out of himself the five subtle elements like the earth etc.

Who are these beings, called *devas*, *sādhyas* and *rishis*? They are the various centres of data processing and potential of action (*indriyas*) in the body of the *Virāḍ* energised by the further infilling of life-force (*prāṇa*) and consciousness (*cit*) by the *Puruṣa* himself.

They are called *devas* because of their power of consciousness (*div* = to illuminate), *sādhyas* because they are capable of bringing about further manifestation (*sadh* = to bring about, to achieve) and *ṛṣis* because of their intuitive knowledge (*ṛṣ* = to know or to visualise).

These devas – who themselves are the *sādhyas* and the *ṛṣis* — now take on the task of secondary and tertiary stages of evolution.

The first step in this process in the separation from the state of undifferentiation, of *tamas* (darkness) here referred to as *Virāṭ*. This *Virāṭ* or *Virāj* is a feminine entity also known as Primordial Nature or *Prakṛti*. This *tamas* or darkness is the principle-of-objectivity, the void which has to be illumined. In the Brhadaranyaka Upaniṣad 1;4 there is a detailed description of the separation of male and female principles and their subsequent copulation from which the variegated universe is produced.

sa haitāvān āsa yathā strīpumāṁsau sampariṣvaktau |
sa imam evātmānam dvedhāpātayat | tatah patiśca patnī cābhavatām ||

He became as large as a woman and a man in close embrace.

He caused that Self to split into two parts. From that arose Husband and Wife.

The Subala Upaniṣad mentions four different states of *Prakṛti* (matter) in creation.

- In its primary, undifferentiated state it is called *avibhakta tamas*, (undifferentiated dark matter).
- In its primary differentiated state it is called *vibhakta tamas* (differentiated dark matter).
- Its next state is called *akṣaram* in which there are the stirring of polarisation of the three forms of energy technically known as *sattva* (centrifugal) *rajas* (revolving), *tamas*, (centripetal) and all the *jivas*.
- In its last stage it is known as *avyakta* in which the internal differentiation has begun. From *avyakta* proceeds the principle known as *mahat* which is the Cosmic Intelligence, from the Cosmic Intelligence comes the *ahaṁkāra* or the Cosmic Ego sense (*ahaṁkāra* or Egoism in Indian philosophy is defined as the notion-of-individuality).

Next proceed the manifestation of the eleven *Indriyas*. The term *Indriya* – is usually translated as “organ of action and perception” and these are described as preceding the creation of the body. This is obviously absurd as the parts of a physical body cannot exist prior to the whole. What is meant is that the potentialities of action & perception come into existence in the mind. In physiological terms the motor and sensory nerve centres come into being.

The next evolutes are the five *tanmātras* (subtle forms of matter) from which proceed the five *mahā-bhūtas* gross states of matter or the classical elements

- The solid (earth)
- the liquid (water),
- energy (fire)
- the gaseous (air) and
- space.

Together these factors constitute the 23 *tattvas* – the basic metaphysical categories which are derived from the Primordial Nature (*Prakṛti*). At the time of creation this process is set in motion by the will of God. Creation is thus only a change of state from the implicit to the explicit from potentiality to actuality, and there is no Original or First creation, or the bringing

forth of something from nothing (*ex nihilo*). Creation is thus cyclic, with alternating periods of involution and evolution.

Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad 6-2 and 3 describes the creation of the elements and the process of triplication, this is a precursor of the more complicated process of quintuplication by which elements are so combined that each contains four parts of itself and one part of each of the other four. This process is clarified in Vishnu Purana 1-2-52/54.

This cosmic evolution is directly undertaken and supervised by the Supreme Being in the form of Aniruddha as explained in the Puruṣa Saṁhita of the Sakālya Brahmaṇa.

In the secondary creation which is the individual evolution, the various jivas are united with their individual bodies specifically created for the experience of the results of their actions (*karma*). Again it must be pointed out that in Vedantic cosmogony the mind precedes the body. The physical body is a product of mind just as the tree is a product of the seed. All the genetic properties contained in potential form in the seed will manifest in the actual physical form of the tree. In the same way all the subliminal activators in the mind (*samskāras*) develop into the *persona*, body and all its associated others and circumstances. This Individual Evolution is also known as *nāma-rūpa-vyākaraṇa* – the division into names (structures) and forms (processes).

This process is effected by *Hiraṇya-garbha* (Brahmā) who is the first Being to be manifested having the Supreme Lord as his over-self directing all his actions. (Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad 6-3-2).

*so'yaṁ devataikṣata | hantāham imāstisro devatā anena jīvenā'tmanā
'nupraviśya nāma-rūpe vyākaraṇānti ||*

The Supreme Being thought, well, let me enter into these three divinities by means of this Individual Self, and let me develop names and forms.

adhi-puruṣa — this Primeval Being is identified here as *Hiraṇya-garbha* more popularly personified as Brahmā – the Creator God. The Puruṣa Saṁhita states that Nārāyaṇa thought of the four faced Hiraṇyagarbha and he appeared. As soon as Brahmā appeared he transcended all sides of the land. Being a jiva of atomic size like the other jivas, his transcendence or pervasion is to be taken to be through his consciousness (*jñāna*) alone and not a physical pervasion like that of the air. Entrusted by the Lord with the tremendous task of creating the individual objects of the world, he was perplexed, not knowing how to set about this task. Aniruddha then asked him to perform a sacrifice appointing his sense organs (*devas*) as the priests, making his body the sacrificial oblation and offering it to the Lord, fixing his mind on Him, considering Him to be the fire consuming it. He told him;—

"By mere contact with My form, your body will expand and become the cosmic egg from which groups of living beings will come out. You attach to them various forms according to the previous creation and become the universal creator."

Vishnu Purana states 2-12-37:

"From that water which is the body of Vishnu, O Brahmana sprang the earth, lotus shaped, together with its mountains, oceans and all other things"

This seems to be the basis for the Puranic version that Brahmā was born from the lotus which sprang from the navel of Vishnu. Here, by water is meant the primordial matter and all its modifications constituting the golden egg in which Hiraṇyagarbha was born, as mentioned by Manu 1-8,9. Kulluka Bhatta commenting on the above verse opines that Manu favours the *tridaṇḍi vedānta siddhānta* i.e. the Viśiṣṭhādvaitic version in his account of creation.

The version given in the Māhābhārata – Mokṣa dharma – also tallies with the creation by Aniruddha. The Subala Upaniṣad affirms that the cosmic egg appeared and from its middle Hiraṇyagarbha came forth. He thus neither created himself nor the place of his appearance — the Cosmic Evolution is outside of his sphere of duty, only *prajā-sṛṣṭhi* (Individual creation) is within his competence. (Vide Brahma sūtra Śrībhāṣyam 1-3-12.

The three Puruṣas mentioned here;– Puruṣa, Virāṭ and Adhi-puruṣa are taken by some commentators to refer to the threefold division of 1. *adhidaivika*, 2. *adhibhautika* and 3. *ādhyātmika*.

The following table shows the Cosmic Principles (Devas) and their mutual relationships.

| ādhidaivika | adhibhautika | ādhyātmika |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Relating to the Supreme | Relating to the elements | relating to the individual Self |
| Brahman (The Supreme Being) | The Social Entity | The Human Being |
| Agni (Fire) | Intelligentsia (Brahmins) | Speech |
| Indra (King of gods) | Law enforcement, defence (kṣatriyas) | Courage, confidence |
| Bhaga (Principle of Inheritance) | Entrepreneurs (vaiśyas) | Fortune |
| Tvaṣṭṛ (the Divine craftsman) | Artisans, Artists (sūdras) | Action |
| Vāyu (Wind) | All living entities (bhūtas) | Vital force |
| Aśvins (Right knowledge & Right Action) | Healers (vaidyas) | respiration. |

As regards the primordial God Hiraṇya-garbha, a circular process is evident. The primal being spontaneously produces the primeval waters; from these arise the primordial God as the first born of the divine Order of Creation, the golden germ of the world ‘who was the first seed resting on the navel of the unborn.’ Hiraṇya-garbha who is the World-self expresses its essence through the environment. It manifests the forms contained within itself. The world is fixed in It like the spokes in the hub of a wheel. It is the thread, *sūtrātman*, on which all beings and all worlds are strung like the beads of a necklace. It is the first-born *Prathama-jā*. It is also called *Brahmā* and these Brahmās are created anew from world to world and creation to creation.

In the Rig Veda 10:121:1 — Hiraṇya-garbha is the golden germ which enters into creation after the first action of the creator. In the Sāṅkhya school, *Prakṛti* (matter, nature) is treated as the insentient object and develops on account of the influence of the multitude of individual selves, and the first product of development is *mahat*, the Great One, or *buddhi*, the intellect – the potential for expansion. It is the development of cosmic intelligence or Hiraṇya-garbha. On the subjective microcosmic level, *buddhi* is the first element of the *liṅga-sarīra* or the subtle body. It is the essence of the individual spirit. *Buddhi* serves as the basis for the development of the ‘principle of individuation’, *ahamkāra*, from which are derived, on the one hand, mind and the ten sense organs, five of perception and five of action and, on the other hand, the subtle elements from which arise in their turn the gross elements. *Sattva* (principle of harmony) is *buddhi*, the innermost of the three circles, the outer being *rajas* (activity) and *tamas* (inertia) which are identified with *ahamkāra* and *manas*, which are the emanations of *rajas* and *tamas*. The *sattva*

or the *buddhi* is the *bija* – the seed of the living individual, since it contains the seeds of karma which develop at each birth into a sense-organism. The *sattva* or *liṅga* is called the Self, the *jīva*. As the *buddhi* is the *sūtrātman* of the individual, so is Hiraṇya-garbha the *sūtrātman* – the thread-controller of the world.

Mantra 6

yat puruṣeṇa haviṣā | devā yajñam atanvata |
vasanto asya-sīd ājyam | grīṣma idhmaś śarat haviḥ || 6 ||

yat = which, when, *puruṣeṇa* = with Puruṣa, *haviṣā* = oblation, *devāḥ* = the gods, *yajñam* = sacrifice, *atanvata* = performed, arranged, *vasantaḥ* = spring, *asya* = of it, *āsīt* = became, was, *ājyam* = clarified butter from goat's milk, *grīṣmaḥ* = summer, *idhmaḥ* = fuel, *śarat* = autumn, *haviḥ* = oblation.

6. Then the devas performed a sacrifice. The Primeval Being Himself was the offering. Spring became the clarified butter, summer the faggots, and the autumn the rice-offering.

Commentary

Secondary Creation — vyaṣṭi sṛṣṭi (Individual Evolution)

In the ancient days, *yajñas* or *yagas* – Vedic sacrifices – were the primary aspect of religion in practice. They are comprised of three parts:–

- (1) dravya (materials needed),
- (2) devata (the deity to be propitiated)
- (3) tyāga (making offerings).

These ceremonies were frequently resorted to for fulfilling personal desires or for bringing about a spiritual result such as the attainment of a heavenly realm after death, where human efforts were considered to be too inadequate to achieve success and divine intervention alone could accomplish it. Any task which needed great effort and sacrifice was metaphorically termed a *yajña* and the practice continues to the present day. Even the Bhagavad gita (3-9) calls all good deeds of service a *yajña*. Hence, it is but natural that the Rishi describes the secondary creation resorted to by the gods as a *yajña*.

Since this is described as happening before the material creation of the universe when no stuff were available for such a sacrifice, these devatas performed it mentally, by imagining the various parts and processes involved in it. For them the body of the *Virāṭ-puruṣa* himself was the sole basic material out of which they had to conduct the sacrifice. Since this Puruṣa was everything, including the *paśu* (or sacrificial victim), in that sacrifice, we can call it '*Puruṣa-yajña*'.

The text mentions the several things needed for performing the *yajña* such as *havis* (offerings like *puroḍaśa* or rice-cake), *ājya* (clarified butter), *idhma* (fuel), *paśu* (an animal) and so on. The process itself includes several acts which are also mentioned in the text, such as fixing the *paridhis* or borders for the sacrificial fires, *bandhana* – tying the victim to the *yūpa-stambha* – the sacrificial post, *prokṣana* – sprinkling water on the animal with sacred grass and many other ritual acts. It is believed that if a *yajña* is performed perfectly with all its subsidiary parts, it will definitely produce its results, either here or hereafter.

The “mental” sacrifice performed by the gods as described is coached as a riddle, which needs to be understood in a proper perspective. In our empirical experience – the reality of today was only a concept of yesterday. A concept of today can become a reality tomorrow. However, the worth and moral greatness of the person who conceives such ideas is an important factor in the whole process.

Here, it is the devas – the divine beings who are all emanations from the Puruṣa himself and hence endowed with a modicum of his powers – that are performing the *saṅkalpika* or *mānasa yajña* (mental sacrifice, *upāsana* or deep meditation). Hence their mental activities must result in physical products, whether subtle or gross.

As directed by Aniruddha, Hiraṇyagarbha performs the *yajña* offering himself to the Supreme Lord in all humility, seeking wisdom and the ability to perform the great task of creation. The Lord being pleased with the self-sacrifice of Hiraṇyagarbha bestows upon him the competence to perform the great act of Creation.

The teaching conveyed in this mantra is that nothing happens in the universe without the will of God. If the Demiurge (Brahma) himself had to perform *ātma-samarpaṇa* (self-sacrifice) how much more important is it for us that are caught up in Samsara to do it in order to be free of suffering and to accomplish anything meaningful.

There are said to be three causal factors in every act of creation.

- The material cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) from which the physical object arises,
- the efficient cause (*upadhāna-kāraṇa*) which is the Creator, and
- the accessory causes (*sahakāri-kāraṇa*) which are the auxiliary factors which contributed to the creation.

For example, the clay is the material cause of a pot, the potter is the efficient cause and the wheel is the accessory cause. In Vedaānta all three causes are in the Godhead Itself. The Divine is the material nature from which It projects the universe. Time (*kāla*) is an essential auxiliary to the act of creation. Its modes in the form of seasons have been taken as accessories in the sacrifice.

The spring is described as the ghee for the sacrifice because it is during spring that the cows produce more milk and therefore more ghee. Summer is considered as the fuel, due to the fact that sticks for the fire are more available in the dry hot summer months. Similarly autumn is the offering because in that season the crops of rice and wheat from which the offerings are made are ripening in abundance in the fields. Autumn is also the optimum season of the year in terms of human wellbeing.

There are two views amongst the commentators about who actually performed the sacrifice. One view is that the term devas refers to the *Indriyas* (sense-organs) of Hiraṇyagarbha-Brahma. The other is that it refers to the *Nitya-Suris*, alluded to later in mantra 8 as *Sādhyas*, because the devas like Indra and the others were created only later by Hiraṇyagarbha.

The Vaikuntha Samhita says that the devas like Indra who dwell in the realm of Svarga are called *Suras*, while the *Nitya Sūris* — the eternal angelic beings who dwell in Vaikuṅṭha are known as *Sādhyas*. In the Hari Bhakti Sudhodaya (5-66) it is said that the *Nitya Sūris* (although only jivas which are eternally liberated) can discharge the duties of creation and dissolution at the behest of the Lord. Lord Viśvaksena the principle Nitya-Sūri is often referred to as the creator of the world. Yamunācārya in the Stotra Ratna 42 says that Viśvaksena is entrusted with

the administration of the *ubhaya vibutis* (the two realms — material and the transcendental) of the Lord. Rāmānuja echoes this sentiment in his Vaikuṅṭha Gadya. It is therefore possible to take the word '*devas*' here as referring to the eternally free beings like Viśvaksena and the other *Nitya Sūris*.

Mantra 7

saptāsyāsan paridhayaḥ | tris sapta samidhaḥ kṛtāḥ |
devā yad yajñam tanvānāḥ | abadhnan puruṣam paśum ||

sapta = seven, *asya* = of it, *āsan* = were, became, *paridhāyaḥ* = enclosing sticks, *triḥ* = thrice, *sapta* = seven, *samidhaḥ* = fuel, *kṛtāḥ* = were made, *devāḥ* = the gods, *yad* = which, when, *yajñam* = sacrifice, *tanvānāḥ* = performing, *abadhnan* = bound, *puruṣam* = the Supreme Being, *paśum* = victim.

7. Then seven were the enclosing sticks (*paridhis*), the kindling sticks (*samidha*) were three times seven. In that sacrifice of the Devas the Primeval Being was bound as the victim.

Commentary

paridhis — In the yajñas sticks are laid on the sides the fire pit (kuṇḍa) these are called the *paridhis* and they are usually only three in number. As the trees were not yet in existence this statement cannot refer to material sticks.

The seven *paridhis* are taken by some commentators to mean the three Vedic fires; (*āhavanīya-agni* – the invocatory fire, *gārhapatya-agni* – the domestic fire upon which the offerings are cooked and *dakṣina-agni* – southern fire of the ancestors); the three priests, and the cosmic fire (Sun).

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa interprets the seven sticks as; three indicating the northern altar – *uttara vedi*, three for the invocatory fire and the seventh symbolizes the Sun. The Maitrayani Upaniṣad states that they represent earth, water, fire, wind, ether, *ahankāra* (notion-of-individuality) and *buddhi* (intellect).

From a tantric yoga perspective the 7 enclosing sticks could refer to the 7 chakras or centres of consciousness in the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*).

Samidhas — once the fire is kindled a bunch of sticks is thrown onto the fire after dipping them in ghee. These are called the *samidhas*. The Paingi Brahmana states that the 21 kindling sticks symbolize the 5 gross elements, 5 subtle elements (*tanmātras*), the 5 pathways of perception (*jñānendriyas*), the 5 pathways of action (*karmendriyas*) and the mind. As these 21 elements (*tattvas*) are the accessory to individual creation they are referred to as kindling sticks.

The whole of the universe and everything in it is being consumed in the Great Fire of Time – and therefore everything is kindling. Some commentators suggest that the 21 fuel sticks are indicative of the processes of time and the universe which is consumed in the on-going cosmic sacrifice. The spatio-temporal universe consists of the 12 months, 6 seasons (winter – *hemanta*; spring – *vasant*, summer – *ghrīṣma*; rainy season – *śiśira* & autumn – *śarad*); the 3 realms of existence (physical, astral and spiritual) and the Sun.

The Sādhyā devas bound Hiraṇyagarbha as the sacrificial animal with a rope. This rope symbolises the Universal Laws (*rta*), and the sacrificial pole (*yūpa*) to which they tied him is nature (*Prakṛti*).

In every sacrifice (*yajña*) the animal victim symbolises the lower brutish mind, this mind has to be bound to the sacrificial post (*yūpa*) which is God.

paśu — is also interpreted as *paśyati iti paśu* — that which sees is a *paśu*. Because the Supreme Being is all seeing He is therefore properly known as *paśu*. The Yogis meditating within their hearts bind the Supreme Seer to their own selves which are represented by the pole or *yūpa*.

Mantra 8

taṁ yajñam barhiṣi praukṣan | puruṣam jātam agrataḥ |
tena devā ayajanta | sādhyā ṛṣayaś ca ye || 8 ||

taṁ = Him, *yajñam* = sacrifice, *barhiṣi* = on the strew, *pra-ukṣan* = besprinkled, *puruṣam* = the Supreme Being, *jātam* = born, *agrataḥ* = before, in the beginning, *tena* = with Him, *devāḥ* = the gods, *ayajanta* = sacrificed, *sādhyāḥ* = the sadhyas, *ṛṣayaḥ* = the sages, *ca ye* = who were.

8. This the Supreme Being, the first born being, was purified by aspersion. Thus was performed the first sacrifice by the devas and rishis of yore.

Commentary

The purport of this mantra is that Hiraṇya-garbha offered himself (*ātma samarpaṇam*) to the Supreme Being in sacrifice. The Gita declares that in the beginning, out of His boundless compassion for the pitiful predicament of the jivas, Krishna created living beings (in the present cycle of evolution) along with sacrifice, so that through sacrifice they could attain all their desires. Rāmānuja in his commentary on the Gita clarifies that the emphasis is on attaining the supreme desire – the *summum bonum* of life which is *mokṣa* or liberation.

The Yogaratna mentions that *virāt*, *barhis* & *Prakṛti* are synonyms all referring to the primordial matter. The sages referred to in the mantra cannot be the Seven Sages (*sapta-ṛṣi*) because they were created by Hiraṇya-garbha at a later stage. Just as the Sādhyas refer to the Nitya Sūris, the term *ṛṣis* (seers) is taken to refer to the liberated ones (*muktas*) in Vaikuṅṭha. The statement that the *ṛṣis* and the *sādhyas* performed the sacrifice can also be taken to mean that the vital breaths, and the organs of action and knowledge (*prāṇas*, *karmendriyas* and *jñanendriyas*) performed the sacrifice.

Mantra 9

tasmād yajñāt sarva hutaḥ | sambhṛtaṁ pṛṣad ājyam |
paśūguś tāguś cakre vāyavyān | āraṇyān grāmyāśca ye || 9 ||

tasmāt = from that, *yajñāt* = from sacrifice, *sarva* = completely, *hutaḥ* = offered, *sambhṛtaṁ* = was collected, *pṛṣat* = congealed, *ājyam* = butter, *paśūn* = animals, *tān* = they, *cakre* = made, *vāyavyān* = beasts of the air, *āraṇyān* = of the forest, *grāmyāḥ* = of the villages, *ca ye* = who were.

9. From that general sacrifice the “dripping ghee” was gathered up. He formed the creatures of the air and the animals both wild and tame.

Commentary

There is a rule according to Gargyayana, that in sacrifices which do not have any subordinate sections in them the offerings have to be made in full, this is why the sacrifice is called *sarvahut*.

It can also be understood as the sacrifice in which all the then manifested universe is offered to the Lord.

Prṣadājyam (“dripping ghee”) is the congealed butter and curds, this symbolises the primordial matter from which the universe was created.

Mantra 10

tasmād yajñāt sarva-hutaḥ | ṛca sāmāni jajñire |
chandāgaṃsi jajñire tasmāt | yajus tasmād ajāyata || 10 ||

tasmāt = from that, *yajñāt* = from sacrifice, *sarva* = completely, *hutaḥ* = offered, *ṛcaḥ* = the couplets of the Rīg Veda, *sāmāni* = the chants of the Sama Veda, *jajñire* = were born, *chandāṃsi* = the metres, *jajñire* = were born; *tasmāt* = from that, *yajus* = the liturgical formulae, *tasmāt* = from that, *ajāyata* = were born.

10. From that great general sacrifice, Rik and Sama hymns were born, therefrom the various metres were born, the Yajus had its birth from it.

Commentary

In this mantra the emanation of the sonic components of creation are mentioned. In their extension they connote the entire Secondary Creation. The Vedas are mentioned here as being 'born' when they are actually eternal and thus have no beginning. According to the Svetasvatara Upaniṣad 6-18. The Lord creates Brahma (*Hiraṇya-garbha*) and imparts the Vedas to him. This occurs at the commencement of each cycle of creation. Manu 1-21 affirms that it is with the help of the Vedic words that Hiraṇyagarbha created the names (*nāma*) and forms (*rūpa*) of all beings and taught them their respective duties. This is supported by Mahābhārata 12-238-93 and Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1-5-64. Thus the preter-natural character (*apauruṣeyatva*) and eternity (*nityatva*) of the Vedas are not brought into question. During the involutionary phase of the cosmos (*pralaya*) the Vedas become dormant and when the cycle of evolution starts again they are remanifested.

Mantra 11

tasmād aśvā ayājanta | ye ke cobhayādataḥ |
gavo ha jajñire tasmāt | tasmāj jātā ajā vayaḥ ||

tasmāt = from that, *aśvāḥ* = horses, *ayājanta* = were born, *ye ke ca* = whatever, all that, *ubhayādataḥ* = have two rows of teeth, *gāvaḥ* = cattle, *ha* = indeed, *jajñire* = were born, *tasmāt* = from that, *jātāḥ* = were born, *ajā vayaḥ* = goats and sheep.

11. From it were horses born, from it all animals with two rows of teeth. Cows were born therefrom, from it were goats and sheep produced.

Commentary

Because the cosmic institute of sacrifice arose in the beginning along with the creation of beings, creation of things that are useful in the sacrifice (*yajña*) are mentioned. Cows are mentioned because they provide the milk, curd and ghee for the offerings. The horses, goats and sheep are the victims. (vide Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1-5)

Mantra 12

yat puruṣaṃ vyadadhuḥ | katidhā vyakalpayan |
mukhaṃ kim asya kau bāhū | kāvūrū pādāvucyete || 12 ||

yat = when, *puruṣam* = Supreme Being, *vyadadhuh* = they divided, *katidhā* = how many parts, (vi) *akalpayan* = created, *mukham* = face mouth, *kim* = what, *asya* = his, *kau* = what, *bāhū* = arms, *kā* = what, *ūrū* = thighs, *pāda* = two feet, *ucyete* = called.

12. When they contemplated the Primeval Being in how many ways did they conceive of Him? What was His mouth ? What were His arms? What were His thighs and feet called?

Commentary

After having mentioned the creation of the sacrificial objects, the creation of the performers of the sacrifice is now mentioned. In the form of questions it is asked what the various parts of Hiraṇyagarbha became. This asking is to generate curiosity in the minds of the students.

Mantra 13

brāhmano'sya mukham āsīt | bāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtaḥ |
ūrū tad asya yad vaiśyaḥ | padbhyāgam śūdro ajāyata || 13 ||

brāhmaṇaḥ = the brahmin, *asya* = his, *mukham* = face mouth, *āsīt* = became, *bāhū* = arms, *rājanyaḥ* = the warrior, *kṛtaḥ* = was made, *ūrū* = thighs, *tad* = that, *asya* = his, *yad* = which, *vaiśyaḥ* = the agriculturist, *padbhyām* = from the two feet, *śūdraḥ* = the proletarian, *ajāyata* = was born.

13. The *Brāhmaṇa* became his mouth, of both His arms was the *Rājanya* made. His thighs became the *Vaiśya*, from His feet was born the *Śūdra*.

Commentary

This mantra teaches the creation of the social entity. Society itself is compared to the “Body” of the Supreme Being. There is no question here about the merits of the various social orders or classes as lower and higher, superior of inferior. All sections of society are equally essential and integral to the existence and smooth functioning of the Social Entity. And it must be remembered that we are speaking of the Supreme Being – who is perfect, divine and immaculate in every part – from head to foot! Just as a person who is deprived of feet, or hands etc is not complete and cannot efficiently perform the daily tasks of living so too a society which is deficient or ailing in any of the four social orders cannot function at its optimum.

The duty of the *Brāhmaṇas* is to preserve the Vedas and transmit the sacred learning. All the organs of knowledge are in the face and head, therefore the *Brāhmaṇas* are mentioned as having arisen from the face of Hiraṇyagarbha. The characteristics of the *Kṣatriya* are strength and valour for the protection and governing of the society, they are therefore considered as having arisen from his arms. For agriculture and trade exertion is required, the *Vaiśyas* are therefore viewed as having arisen from the thighs of Hiraṇyagarbha. The feet are the limbs upon which the whole body depends for its mobility, society is mobile through the work and service of the *Śūdra* community.

It is important to note that the *Brāhmaṇas* become such (*āsīt*), the *Kṣatriyas* are made (*kṛtaḥ*) as are the *Vaiśyas*, but the *Śūdras* are born (*ajāyata*). Everyone is born a *Śūdra* and it is through initiation and sacred learning that one becomes a *dvija* (twice-born). Lord Krishna states in the Gita 4-13 that these four categories of society were created by Him according to innate characteristics and predisposition.

Mantra 14

candramā manaso jātaḥ | cakṣoḥ sūryo ajāyata |
mukhād indraś cāgnīś ca | prāṇād vāyur ajāyata || 14 ||

candramā = the Moon, *manasaḥ* = from his mind, *jātaḥ* = was born, *cakṣoḥ* = from his eye, *sūryaḥ* = the Sun, *ajāyata* = was born, *mukhāt* = from his mouth, *indraḥ* = Indra, *ca* = and, *agniḥ* = Agni, *ca* = and, *prāṇāt* = from his breath, *vāyuḥ* = Vayu, *ajāyata* = was born.

14. The Moon arose from His mind, and from His eye the Sun had birth. From His mouth were Indra and Agni born, from His breath came the wind.

Commentary

This mantra deals with the creation of the deities which are the recipients of the Vedic sacrifices. The moon is the presiding deity of the mind, it is cool and gratifying, bringing relief from the scorching heat of the day. This is like the disposition of the lord who gives relief from the searing heat of repeated rebirths and grants the coolness of liberation. The moon is therefore said to be born from the mind of Hiranyagarbha who represents the *śarīra* (body) of the Supreme.

Without light the eye cannot see objects, the Sun is representative of light in its totality. The sun as symbolic of knowledge dispels the darkness of ignorance and bestows enlightenment, he is therefore the deity presiding over the eye – both in a physical and spiritual sense – the third eye of intuition. Therefore it is maintained that the sun was born from the eye of Hiranyagarbha.

Agni is said to the mouth of the other deities because he carries the oblations offered in the sacred fires to them; hence Agni is said to have been born from the mouth of the Demiurge. *Prāṇa* is the vital force of the cosmos, in the external universe its gross form is the wind and its subtle form is the life breath.

Mukha — means face as well as mouth. The face is the index to one's character and lustre. Indra is the ruler of the devas, and thus shining in his splendour is said to have arisen from the face of the creator.

According to the Aitareya Upaniṣad section 2, the following are the Devas or cosmic forces which enter and reside within the human body;—

- *Agnir vāgbhūtvā mukham prāviśad* – Agni (fire) became speech and entered the mouth.
- *vāyuḥ prāṇo bhūtvā nāsike prāviśad* – Vayu (wind) became the breath of life and entered the nose.
- *ādityas cakṣur bhūtvākṣiṇi prāviśad* – Aditya (sun) becoming sight entered the eyes.
- *diśaḥ śrotraṃ bhūtvā karṇau prāviśan* – The directions of space becoming hearing entered the ears.
- *oṣadhi-vanaspatayo lomāni bhūtvā tvacam prāviśaṃś* — the trees and herbs becoming hairs entered the skin.
- *candramā mano bhūtvā hṛdayaṃ prāviśan* – the moon becoming mind entered the heart (all the ancients believed that the mind was located in the heart)
- *mṛtyur apāno bhūtvā nābhiṃ prāviśad* – death becoming the force of elimination entered into the navel.
- *āpo reto bhūtvā śiśnam prāviśan* – Water becoming semen entered into the reproductive organs.

See Atharva Veda Book 11 hymn 8

Mantra 15

nābhyā āsīd antarikṣam | śīrṣṇo dyaus samavartata |
padbhyāṁ bhūmir diśaś śrotrāt | tathā lokāgamā akalpayan || 15 ||

nābhyā = from his navel, *āsīt* = became, *antarikṣam* = the Astral region, *śīrṣṇaḥ* = from his head, *dyauḥ* = the Transcendental region, (sam) *avartata* = was evolved, *padbhyāṁ* = from his two feet, *bhūmiḥ* = the earth, *diśaḥ* = the directions, *śrotrāt* = from ears, *tathā* = thus, *lokān* = the worlds, *akalpayan* = fashioned, created.

15. From His navel came the astral world, and from His head the world beyond. Earth from His feet and space from His ears, thus did they fashion the worlds.

Commentary

This mantra mentions the creation of various worlds that are attainable by the performers of the sacrifices. *Dyaus* – The astral world – indicates all the seven transcendental realms (*lokas*). The earth came from the feet of the Cosmic Being. The earth is the support of all creatures, it is the only *karma bhūmi* – realm of action – from which final release can be obtained. All the other realms are realms of experience only – either suffering or joy. Devotion to God is the greatest means of liberation.

The word *diśa* (direction) is indicative of space as well as the various *dvīpas* or continents of the world. The word *tathā* or "thus", "in this manner" indicates that the worlds were created in the same way as they had been in the previous cycles of creation as mentioned in the Mahā Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad and other Vedic texts. The plural of *akalpayan* – 'created' may be taken either as poetic licence or as referring to the *nitya sūris* (*sādhyas*) who were mentioned as creating the worlds through the agency of Hiraṇyagarbha.

This ends the description of the Sacrifice of Creation. The following three mantras extol the Supreme Being in answer to the question as to who knows the Highest Being with His vyūhas (Emanations) in the *tripāda vibhūti* (Transcendental world).

Mantra 16

vedāham etaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntam | āditya varṇaṁ tamasas tu pāre |
sarvāṇi rūpāṇi vicitrya dhīraḥ | nāmāni kṛtvā bhivadan yadāste || 16 ||

veda = know, *aham* = I, *etaṁ* = this, *puruṣaṁ* = Being, *mahāntam* = Great, *āditya* = sun, *varṇaṁ* = colour, *tamaśaḥ* = darkness, ignorance, *tu* = but, *pāre* = beyond, *sarvāṇi* = all, *rūpāṇi* = forms, *vicitrya* = manifold, *dhīraḥ* = mentally creates, *nāmāni* = names, *kṛtvā* = having made, *abhivadan* = called, *yad* = whatever, *āste* = existed

16. I know the mighty Supreme Being, whose colour is like the Sun, beyond the reach of darkness. He the Omniscient One, Himself creates all the manifold forms and calls them by various names.

Commentary

mahāntam — great or mighty means that He (*Nārāyaṇa*) is indescribable in His essential nature (*svarūpa*), omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, auspicious qualities etc. His colour is so refulgent like the sun that it is difficult to look at Him.

tamas — "darkness" refers in many Vedic texts to Prakṛti or Primeval matter. By the rule of association it can also be understood as referring to the other two Gunas (*rajas* and *sattva*) of which it is the first. Thus the Supreme Being is said to transcend the material world

and remains untouched by the effects of the material nature and the three Gunas. The transcendental region of *tripāda vibhūti* consists of pure *śuddha sattva* or transcendental matter. *Tamas* can also be taken to mean "ignorance" and so the Supreme Lord is described as the Supreme Light of Wisdom which transcends the darkness of ignorance.

dhīraḥ — *dhī* refers to *jñāna* (cognition) or *saṅkalpa* (resolve), it has already been said that Narayana creates the worlds by His mere will; and His will is always true and well directed (*satya-saṅkalpa*). *Dhīraḥ* also means the "foremost among the noble ones", because the Lord's compassion is exemplified by bestowing Grace even on those who do not know Him, in order that they too may have an opportunity to attain liberation

This mantra is a summary of the account of creation and praises the Lord whose cognition is unlimited and whose power inconceivable. He also transcends the material universe which He creates and which He pervades.

Mantra 17

dhātā purastād yam udājahāra | śakraḥ pravidvān pradiśaś-catasraḥ |
tam evaṁ vidvān amṛta iha bhavati | nānyaḥ panthā ayanāya vidyate || 17 ||

dhātā = the Creator, *purastād* = before, previously, *yam* = who, (ud) *ā jahāra* = knew in His essence, *śakraḥ* = Indra, *pravidvān* = revealed, made known, *pradiśaḥ* = in the directions, *catasraḥ* = four, *tam* = him, *evaṁ* = thus, *vidvān* = knows, *amṛta* = immortal, *iha* = here, *bhavati* = becomes, *na* = no, *anyaḥ* = other, *panthā* = way, path, *ayanāya* = to the Supreme Abode, *vidyate* = exists.

17. The first creator [Brahma] knew the Supreme Being, he in turn revealed [this knowledge] to Shakra [Indra] who proclaimed it in the four directions. Hence even today he who knows Him and the creation thus verily attains immortality. There is no other way. [For spiritual perfection]

Commentary

Indra — the King-of-the-gods in its derivative sense means the "King-of-the-sense-organs" and thus refers to the mind.

pradiśaś catasraḥ — means "the lords of the four directions," this indicates not only the actual regents of space but also the sages that live in all directions and who dedicate their austerities to the welfare of all beings.

evam — thus; he who knows the universe as permeated, pervaded and possessed by the Supreme Being attains liberation.

The Veda unequivocally declares – *brahma-vid āpnoti param* – the knower of Brahma attains the supreme, this is affirmed here and even stresses that there is no other way than empirical realisation. Vedanta is not based on belief in prescribed dogmas and creeds but on direct empirical realisation of the truth.

Mantra 18

yajñena yajñam ayajanta devāḥ | tāni dharmāṇi prathamā-nyāsan |
te ha nākaṁ mahimānaḥ sacante | yatra pūrve sādhyās santi devāḥ ||

yajñena = by sacrifice, *yajñam* = sacrifice, *ayajanta* = created, *devāḥ* = the gods, *tāni* = these, *dharmāṇi* = ordinances, *prathamā-* = the first, *yāsan* = became, *te* = they, *ha* = indeed, *nākaṁ* = the firmament, *mahimānaḥ* = the Great Ones, *sacante* = reached, *yatra* = where, *pūrve* = previously, *sādhyāḥ* = Sadhyas, *santi* = were, *devāḥ* = the gods.

18. The gods sacrificed through sacrifice, thus were the first ordinances established. Those great beings who base their lives upon sacrifice verily reach the highest Spiritual Realm where all the *sādhyas* (*nitya sūris*) dwell.

Commentary

This mantra now declares the fruits obtained by those who follow this path of wisdom – *brahma-jñāna*. In the beginning the devas worshipped Nārāyaṇa through this mental sacrifice (meditation) offering themselves to the Supreme Lord – *ātma-samarpaṇa* or *prapatti* – and this surrendering to the Supreme Being is the foremost among the means to attain final liberation, ordained even in the very beginning of creation.

The Gita classifies human beings as either having *daivi sampat* – divine nature i.e. the gods, and those with *āsuri sampat* – those of demonic nature. So the 'gods' mentioned in this mantra can also be taken as referring to human beings who are endowed with *daivi sampat*.

mahimānaḥ — means "great ones": because they obtain a greatness equal to that of Lord Narayana as stated in the Maha Narayana Upaniṣad; *brāhmaṇo mahimānam āpnoti* – "the knowers of Brahma attain to greatness".

The sacrifice — *yajña* – upon which the life is to be based is firstly offering of oneself to God in total self-surrender (*prapatti*) and then to dedicate one's life to service of all beings, this is the meaning of sacrificing oneself for the sake of others. The mantra used in Vedic sacrifices is *svāhā* – which means *svatma-hanana* – destruction or negation of self-reference

The Veda states – *tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ* "that is the Supreme Abode of Lord Vishnu which is always seen (experienced) by the nitya suris" [Rig Veda 1;22;20] This statement is affirmed here.

Dvitiya Anuvaka

Mantra 19

adbhyaḥ sambhūtaḥ pṛthivyai rasāc ca | viśvakarmaṇaḥ samavartatādhi |
tasya tvaṣṭā vidadhad rūpam-eti | tat puruṣasya viśvam ājānam agre ||

adbhyaḥ = by water, *sambhūtaḥ* = arose, was created, *pṛthivyai* = the earth, *rasāt* = from the watery element, *ca* = and, etc. (the other elements) *viśvakarmaṇaḥ* = by Viśvakarma, *samavartata* = with all perfection, *adhi* = above, *tasya* = his, of him, *tvāṣṭā* = the Creator of Forms, *vidadhad* = fashioned, *rūpam* = form, *eti* = proceeded, *tat* = that, *puruṣasya* = of the Supreme Being, *viśvam* = the Universe, *ājānam* = was manifest, *agre* = previously, in the beginning.

19. In the beginning this universe arose from *Viśvakarma* [the Universal Architect] through water, earth, and the other elements. He excelled *Āditya*, *Indra* and the other gods. Fashioning the form thereof *Tvaṣṭa* proceeded, thus was the universe created in the beginning from the Primeval Being.

Commentary

Viśvakarma is another name for Brahmā the creator.

adbhyaḥ sambhūtaḥ pṛthivyai — *pṛthivi* means the Material Nature, which arose from the primeval waters (*ap*). The primeval waters are the causal substance of Material Nature. They are the source of all substances, and pervades them – they are a manifestation of the all-pervading Lord Vishnu.

The Sun is also called Tvaṣṭṛ who rises each day and cause all beings to begin their daily activity. This is symbolic of the Supreme Being who at the end of the night of Cosmic Dissolution (*Pralaya*) brings forth once again the entire creation from within Himself.

Mantra 20

vedāham etaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntam | āditya varṇaṁ tamaśaḥ parastāt |
tam evaṁ vidvān amṛta iha bhavati | nānyaḥ panthā vidyate' yanāya ||

veda = know, *aham* = I, *etaṁ* = this, *puruṣaṁ* = Being, *mahāntam* = Great, *āditya* = sun, *varṇaṁ* = color, radiance, *tamaśaḥ* = than darkness, *parastāt* = transcendent, *tam* = him, *evaṁ* = thus, *vidvān* = knower, *amṛta* = immortal, *iha* = here, in this world, *bhavati* = he becomes, *na* = not, *anyaḥ* = other, *panthā* = path, *vidyate* = is, *ayanāya* = to a higher state.

20. I know this mighty Supreme Being whose splendour is like the sun, beyond the reach of darkness. He alone who knows Him becomes immortal here, there is no other path to liberation.

This mantra is also found in the Svetasvatara Upaniṣad 3-8 with a slight variation.

Mantra 21

prajāpatiś carati garbhe antaḥ | ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate |
tasya dhīrāḥ parijānanti yonim | marīcīnām padam icchanti vedhasaḥ ||

prajāpatiḥ = the Lord of Beings, *carati* = he moves, dwells, *garbhe* = in the womb, inner most parts, *antaḥ* = within, *ajāyamānaḥ* = the Unborn, *bahudhā* = multifarious, *vijāyate* = is manifested, *tasya* = of Him, *dhīrāḥ* = the wise sages, *parijānanti* = know well, *yonim* = location, source, *marīcīnām* = of Marici and others, *padam* = abode, ultimate state, *icchanti* = they desire, *vedhasaḥ* = the first patriarchs.

21. In the womb moves Prajāpati [the Lord of beings], He, never becoming born, is manifested in variegated forms. The wise discern the Source from whence He arises, the first patriarchs sought the state which Marici and the others had obtained.

Commentary

The Supreme Lord is the effective as well as the material cause of the universe. He pervades the universe from within and from without. The ultimate can only be revealed to the human intellect through the medium of paradoxes. The Unborn becoming born in multiple forms is the ultimate paradox. If we take the one extreme we become entangled in the problem of absolutism and transcendism, if we take the other extreme of everything being God we are trapped in pantheism, the truth is somewhere in between and beyond!

Here the reference is to the Sun who is Prajāpati the "Lord of all beings" moving (poetically speaking) about in the atmosphere. Marīci (Light) according to the Mahabharata is one of the seven sages. Manu calls them the Lords of Progeny (*prajāpatīs*). He was one of the sons of Brahma and the father of the sage Kaśyapa (Vision).

In the Aitareya Upaniṣad 1.1.2 it is stated — He (Brahma) created these worlds; the causal-waters (*ambhas*), light (*marīci*) death (*māra*) and the physical waters (*ap*).

Mantra 22

yo devebhya ātapati | yo devānām purohitaḥ |
purvo yo devebhyo jātaḥ | namo rucāya brāhmaye ||

yaḥ = he that, *devebhyaḥ* = to the gods, *ātapati* = lights up, heats, *yaḥ* = he that, *devānām* = of the gods, *purohitaḥ* = is foremost, *purvaḥ* = before, *yaḥ* = he that *devebhyaḥ* = from the gods, *jātaḥ* = was born, *namaḥ* = salutations, *rucāya* = resplendent, *brāhmaye* = to the Great One.

22. He who gives light and heat to the gods, the First, Foremost agent of the gods, manifest before the gods, To Him, to the Resplendent, to the Great One salutations be.

Commentary

This mantra is referring to Agni who is here called the *purohita* of the gods. Agni is considered to have three essential forms – earthly fire, sun and lightning.

Purohita means the foremost agent, and refers to the domestic priest who mediates between the devotees and the devas through the medium of the fire. Agni then mediates between the human purohitas and the gods because he is their messenger and the one that carries the oblations to them; *Havya-vāhana*. In many places in the Vedas we find the invocation that begins with *Agna-viṣṇu*; Agni is the lowest of the gods and Vishnu is the Supreme Lord the Highest One – *Parama-puruṣa*. So all the other deities and celestial beings exist between these two.

rucāya brahmaye — can be taken as one compound referring to Brahmā-tejas or the radiance of spiritual practice.

Mantra 23

rucam̐ brāhmaṇam̐ janayantaḥ | devā agre tad abruvan |
yas tvaivam̐ brāhmaṇo vidyāt | tasya devā asan vaśe || 23 ||

rucam̐ = the resplendant, *brāhmaṇam̐* = the Great One, *janayantaḥ* = made manifest, *devāḥ* = the gods, *agre* = previously, at first, *tat* = that, *abruvan* = spake, *yaḥ* = whoever, *tu* = indeed, *evam̐* = thus, *brāhmaṇaḥ* = the wise one, *vidyāt* = knows, *tasya* = his, *devāḥ* = the gods, *asan* = they become, *vaśe* = controlled.

23. Thus spake the gods at first, as they begat the Bright and Holy One; The brahmin who may know you thus, shall obtain dominion over all the gods.

Commentary

As they begat the bright and Holy One refers here to Spiritual Knowledge of Brahman, which is illuminating. They then declared that whoever knows Brahman or the Jiva in it's essential nature, shall have dominion over all the gods because he has realised the oneness of all the jivas. If the “gods” are taken to be the sense organs then it means that one achieves self-mastery.

The fully enlightened beings are able to control the devas through their knowledge and the power of the mantras. The ideology behind this is that everyone is the creator of his/her own destiny (*karma*). By applying the fundamental laws of action and re-action one can create one's own future, and even modify the present to some extent by the manipulation of cosmic forces (*devas*). It is like harnessing the wind or water to move machinery and produce electricity etc.

Mantra 24

hrīś ca te lakṣmīś ca patnyau | aho rātre pārśve | nakṣatrāṇi rūpam |
aśvinau vyāttam | iṣṭam̐ maniṣāṇa | amum̐ maniṣāṇa | sarvam̐ maniṣāṇaḥ || 24 ||

hrīḥ = Beauty, *ca* = and, *te* = to you, *lakṣmīḥ* = Fortune, *patnyau* = the two wives, *aho rātre* = day and night, *pārśve* = sides, (arms), *nakṣatrāṇi* = the constellations, *rūpam* = form, *aśvinau* = the Ashvins, *vyāttam* = mouth, *iṣṭam̐* = desirable, *maniṣāṇa* = I desire, *amum̐* = this, *maniṣāṇa* = I desire, *sarvam̐* = everything, *maniṣāṇaḥ* = I desire.

24. Beauty and Lakshmi are your two consorts, each side of you are day and night. The constellations are your form, the Ashvins your mouth. Being such grant me whatever I desire; yonder world and all other happiness.

Commentary

This mantra is addressed to the Supreme Being in the form of Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa or the refulgent Sun of the universe. The two wives or *śaktis* (energies) of the Lord are Bhūdevi who is a personification of the Material Energy and the universal principle of fortitude, and Śrīdevi who is the Lord's Preserving Energy and the universal principle of compassion manifesting through prosperity and wealth which is to be used for the welfare of all beings (*dhana-dharmasya-mūlam* – wealth is the root of righteousness). The world or Bhūdevi is activated, seen and appreciated by the light of the Sun, She is therefore referred to as "Beauty" and by day one works for the benefit of all beings – Lakshmi means “she-of-the-hundred-thousands” or she-who-is-concerned-for-the-welfare-of-others.

Day and night are here poetically described as the two sides of the Lord, when He faces us it is day and when He turns His back to us it is night.

The constellations are your form — all the light of the stars is nothing but the reflected light of the Sun. The Sun is the marker of Time and the zodiac (*rāśi*) and constellations (*nakṣatras*) are the hours and minutes.

Aśvins are the twin sons of the Sun – the Lord of Truth, and are the physicians of the devas. They are the powers of Truth hence they are described as proceeding from the mouth of the Supreme Lord of Truth. Their special function is to develop in humans the perfection of Right Action (*karma-yoga*) and Right Knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*) which in turn lead to the supreme Beatitude. They are always depicted as having horses' heads. The horse is the symbol of power, intelligence and skill and their other name is *Nāsatya* – Lords of movement, the guides on the spiritual journey. They are also known as the *Śubhaspati* – the Lords of perfect bliss and joy.

The Lord pervades the entire universe from within and without, grant that which I desire – To the true Vaishnava the highest desire and goal is uninterrupted service of the Lord for eternity. All other benefits we ask for are intended for His service as well as the service and welfare of others.

The Sages who are free from the pairs of opposites, whose minds are well directed and who are devoted to the welfare of all beings, become cleansed of all impurities and attain the bliss of the Brahman. (Gita 5;25)

Śānti Pāṭhaḥ

tacchaṁyor āvṛṇīmahe | gātuṁ yajñāya | gātuṁ yajñapataye | daivī svastir-astu naḥ
| svastir mānuṣebhyaḥ | ūrdhvaṁ jigātu bheṣajaṁ | śaṁ no astu dvipade | śaṁ
catuspade | om śāntiś śāntiś śāntiḥ

We worship the Supreme Being for the welfare of all. May all miseries and shortcomings leave us forever so that we may always chant in the sacrifices and for the Lord of Sacrifices. May the medicinal herbs grow in potency, so that diseases can be cured effectively. May the devas grant us peace. May all human beings be happy, may all the birds and the beasts also be happy. Om Peace Peace Peace.

All Vedic sacrifices have the welfare of all beings as their basis. We pray for health and wealth so that our strong bodies and minds along with the wealth that is bestowed upon us can be utilised for the service of the whole world.

*yā vai sā pṛthivīyaṃ vāva sā yad idaṃ asmin pūruṣe śarīram |
asmin hīme prāṇāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ | etad eva nātiśīyante || Chand. Up. 3.12.3.*

Verily what this earth is, that verily is like the body of the Supreme Being,
for on it the life forces are established they do not go beyond.

Commentary on the Puruṣa Sukta from the Srimad Bhagavatam Sk 2;1

Sri Suka said:

23. A person who has succeeded in practising steady posture, in controlling the breath, in abandoning attachments and in subduing the senses, should fix his mind on the aggregate form (sthūla rūpa) of the Lord with the help of the intellect.

24. This universe, which is the foremost of the ancient creations, is the form of the Lord. In this Cosmic Form all the past, the present and the future subsist.

25. Permeating this universal cosmic form, with its seven sheaths — consisting of the five elements, egoism, and the universal intelligence — there is the Virat-puruṣa — the Cosmic Divinity. He is the real object of concentration.

Meditation on the Cosmic Form

26. Patala is the underside of His feet. The heels and the upper part of the feet constitute Rasatala. Mahatala is the ankle of the Creator; and Talatala, His calves.

27. The two knees of the Cosmic Being is Sutala, and the two thighs are Vitala and Atala, while, O King ! His hips constitute the Bhuh or the Earth sphere, and His deep navel, the sky.

28. The sphere Swarga is considered to be His chest, Maharloka the neck, Janaloka the face, and Tapoloka the forehead, while Satyaloka is the head of that thousand-headed Being.

29. Indra and the Devas are identified as His arms, the quarters as His ears, sound as His organ of hearing, the (twin) Ashwins as His nostrils, scent as His organ of smelling, and the burning fire as His mouth.

30. The skies constitute His eye-balls; the sun and the moon, His optic nerves; day and night, His eye-lids; the Brahma-loka, His brow; the waters, His four sides; and taste, His tongue.

31. The Vedas constitute His Brahma-randhra at the crown; His molars are represented by Yama, the God of Death; His (front) teeth are the expression of love; His smile is the world infatuating Maya; and His glance is the limitless creation.

32. His upper lip is modesty; lower lip = greed; breast = Dharma, back = Adharma; generative organ = Prajapati; testicles = Mitra and Varuna; abdomen = ocean; and bones = mountains.

33. The rivers are His blood vessels; the trees = His hair; the powerful wind = His breath; time = His movement; and the evolution of Prakriti (Material Nature) with its three Gunas = His sport.

34. The locks of hair of the Lord are the clouds; His cloth is the dusk, O greatest of the Kurus. Unmanifested Prakriti (Nature) is His heart, and His mind is the moon, the source of all gentle emotions.

35. The Mahat-tattva (the cosmic intelligence) is regarded as His Citta (consciousness), and Rudra as the ego-sense of this Universal Being. Animals like elephants, camels, horses and mules are thought of as His nails; and other animals like cows, deer, etc. as His waist.

36. Birds with splendid colours, shape and powers are exhibitions of His wonderful craftsmanship; the first Manu is His intelligence; and mankind his abode. The celestial artistes

like Gandharvas, Vidyadharas, Charanas etc. are His musical tunes while Asuras constitute His prowess.

37. The Brahmana is His face; the Kshatriya His arm; the Vaishya, His thigh; and the Sudra, His feet. The sacrificial rite invoking many divinities and requiring a great many ritualistic ingredients, is the work approved by Him.

38. What I have described to you is the location of the limbs and organs of the all-comprehensive Cosmic Being. The spiritual seeker tries to concentrate exclusively on this gross cosmic body of the Lord, outside which there is nothing more in this manifested Universe.

Verses 26 — 28 mention the 14 chakras or centres of consciousness and energy that are conceived of in the cosmic form of the Lord.

| | World | Cakra | Meaning |
|----|------------|--------------|--|
| 1 | Satyaloka | Sahasrāra | Illumination, enlightenment, communion with God. |
| 2 | Tapoloka | Ajña | Divine sight, the ability to perceive things as they really are. Transcendence of time and space |
| 3 | Janaloka | viśudha | Divine, universal love, realisation of one's divine nature and an outpouring of compassion for all beings |
| 4 | Maharloka | anāhata | Direct cognition, insight into human nature, understanding of subtle forces. |
| 5 | Svarloka | Maṇipura | Centre of willpower, discovery of individuality, endurance and discipline |
| 6 | Bhuvanloka | svadhiṣṭhāna | Reason and intellectual power the beginning of enquiry and the search for meaning. |
| 7 | Bhūloka | mūlādhara | memory-time-space, seat of basic instincts and drives. The centre of libido. |
| 8 | Put | Atala | "without bottom" — Fear and lust, awareness is clouded by indecision and anxiety. |
| 9 | Avīchi | vītala | "region of the lost" Raging anger, the desire to injure others. |
| 10 | Sanhata | sutala | "great nether region" Retaliatory jealousy, the overwhelming desire to have what others have and a preoccupation with what one is not. |
| 11 | Tāmiśra | talātala | "under the lower level" prolonged confusion, perversion replaces natural joy, reason is warped. |
| 12 | Rijiṣa | rasātala | "lower moist region" selfishness obsession with "I" and "mine". All actions are motivated by personal gain. |
| 13 | Kudmala | mahātala | "greatest lower region" lack of conscience, total self absorption, blindness to all higher impulses. |
| 14 | Kakola | pātala | "lowest region of wickedness" Malice and murder, hate, killing for its own enjoyment, total lack of remorse, reason is non-existent. |

In Isvara we have the two elements of wisdom and power,

The Essential nature of the Divine is not to be conceived on the human lines. He is not to be thought of as a greatly "magnified person". We should not attribute to the Divine human qualities as we know them. We have — (1) The Absolute, (2) God, as Creative Power, (3) God immanent in this world. These are not to be regarded as separate entities. They are arranged in this order because there is a logical priority. The Absolute must be there with all its possibilities before the Divine Creativity can choose one. The divine choice must be there before there can be the Divine immanent in this world. This is a logical succession and not a temporal one. The world-spirit must be there before there can be the world. We thus get the four poises or statuses of reality:— (1) the Absolute, Brahman (2) the Creative Spirit, Isvara, (3) the World-spirit, Hiranya-garbha, and (4) the World, jagat, viraj. This is the way the Hindu thinkers interpret the integral nature of the Supreme Reality. Mandukya Upaniṣad says that Brahman is catus-pat, four-footed, and its four principles are Brahman, Isvara, Hiranya-garbha and Viraj.

The four states stand on the subjective side for the four kinds of Self; vaiśvānara — the experiencer of gross things; taijasa — the experiencer of the subtle, prājña — the experiencer of the unmanifested objectivity, and the turīya — the Supreme Self.

The Mandukya Upaniṣad, by an analysis on the four modes of consciousness, waking, dream, deep sleep and illumined consciousness, makes out that the last is the basis of the other three.

On the objective side we have the cosmos — Viraj, the World-self — Hiranya-garbha, the Supreme God — Isvara, and the Absolute — Brahman. By looking upon Isvara as prajña, it is suggested that the supreme intelligence who dwells in the sleeping state holds all things in an unmanifested condition. The divine wisdom sees all things, not as human reason does in parts and relations, but in the original reason of their existence, their primal truth and reality. It is what the Stoics call spermatikos or the seed Logos which is manifested in conscious beings as a number of seed logoi.

* For instance mark the words — sutra-yajña for preparing thread or bhū-dana-yajña for gifting lands.

The Sukta says that in the mental sacrifice the gods offered the Vasanta-rtu (spring season) as djya or ghee into the sacrificial fire. It is a wellknown fact that during the spring season the whole flora and fauna will be at its best. Domestic animals, especially the cows, can eat plenty of grass and hence can yield milk in profuse quantities. So, milk, curds and ghee will be available in good quantity, for being used in the sacrificial rites. This gives us a clue as to the selection of the Vasanta or the spring for being offered as ajya (ghee-oblation) in that sacrifice. However, neither ghee nor the spring season existed then, at the time of this mental sacrifice! How then could the gods perform it? Here, we have to stretch our powers of imagination a little. These gods remembered the previous cycle of creation and the last created world, remembered its spring season, mentally converted it into djya and poured it as oblation into the fire of the present mental sacrifice. Axiomatically, this oblation instantly resulted in the physical production of the Vasanta-rtu or the spring season of this creation. This logic

or mode of explanation can now be extended to the other items of the sacrifice in a similar manner.

Thus were produced the seven chandas or Vedic metres, the twelve months, the three worlds, the five seasons, all objects of pleasure and enjoyment, various types of animals and the four Vedas. In other words, every conceivable object of creation was produced out of that great mental sacrifice of the gods.

It is interesting to note that in this act of creation, humans come last. But, are undoubtedly, the pinnacle of the whole process.

The Sukta, while narrating the creation of the human beings, puts it in a picturesque way. When the gods offered the various limbs of the Viratpurusa who himself had been treated as the pashu or animal for the sacrifice, into the sacrificial fire-of course, all in imagination since it was a mental or symbolic sacrifice—there came out of that offering, the people of the four varnas or groups — the brahmana, the ksatriya, the vaisya and the sudra. The brahmana emerged out of the face (or the mouth) of the Viratpurusa, the ksatriya (called rajanya) was produced out of his arms, the vaisya was created out of his two thighs whereas the sudra sprang from his feet. In other words, these people of the four varnas were produced when the respective limbs of the Viratpurusa were offered in that symbolic, mental, sacrifice.

The creation process continued further when the moon and the sun were born out of his mind and eyes. Indra and Agni emerged out of his mouth. So also Vayu or air was produced out of his prana or vital breath. This was followed by the appearance of antariksa (intervening space) from the navel, heaven from the head, earth from the feet, directions from the ears as also all the worlds.

The creation of the human beings as belonging to the four well known varnas or social groups and describing their emergence from the different limbs of the Viratpurusa, especially of the sudra from the feet, has raised bitter controversies and heated debates. The statement has even been construed as a machination of the brahmanas to subdue and enslave the others, especially the sudras. The rancour generated by such polemics based on a misunderstanding of the text, coupled with or nurtured by unhappy social environment has done enough damage to the solidarity of the Hindu society. Hence the subject needs a more extensive treatment.

THE VARNA SYSTEM AND THE PURUṢA SUKTA

Everyone who is able chooses a vocation according to one's desire and aptitude. It is the duty of the society to provide suitable opportunities for the citizens to choose and pursue those vocations that conform to their nature. This is the principle and philosophy behind the varna system. The Purusa Sukta did not originate the system but only recognised its existence and described it picturesquely, in a highly poetical and symbolic language.

It is sometimes alleged that the varna system did not exist in the early Vedic society but appeared with its ebb. Since the Purusa Sukta refers to it, it is sometimes alleged that this work was, chronologically speaking, a later composition added on to the earlier part. But

this is not correct since there are enough references in other parts of the Rig Veda to the already existing varna system (vide Rig Veda Samhita 8.35.16.7; 1.10.8.7).

The brahmanas were the custodians of Vedic knowledge and culture which was transmitted orally hence they are described as arising from the mouth or the face of the Virat Purusa. Similarly, the birth of the ksatriyas or the rajanyas (warriors and kings) from the arms of the Virat Purusa is also an indication of their use of their arms in the protection and administration of society. The vaishyas were the main segment of the population supporting and sustaining the whole society by their economic activities. Hence the description of their being born out of the thighs of the Virat Purusa. Without the feet, the body cannot stand erect, nor can it move anywhere. So too the society cannot exist nor advance to any degree without the proletariat, which are the Sudras. The major factor to be kept in mind is that all of the four varnas were arose out of the body of the Virat-Purusa (God) and hence all are equally divine.

Social hierarchy is an inevitable fact of life which cannot be wished away. It exists even today in all societies including the socialist or the communist.

Much of the discontent roused by the Purusa-sukta regarding the Sudras was, mainly, due to two factors: (a) the notion that the 'head' is superior and the 'feet' are inferior in status; and (b) the nasty treatment that they have sometimes received at the hands of the upper classes of the society. The former is a notion that does not stand close scrutiny. Except in the game of football, where the head and the feet may be of equal importance, in all other situations of our life, the relative importance of our limbs varies as the occasion demands. For instance, while doing abhiseka or giving a ceremonial bath to the deity in a temple, or, laying the foundation stone for a building it is the hand (amrta-hasta?) that gets precedence and not the head. While honouring the elders, especially the religious leaders, puja (worship) is done to the feet and not to the head! While tending little children with love, we keep them in our lap (thighs?) and not on our crown! A cripple will perhaps consider the possession of feet as more important!

As regards the latter, the mistake lies mainly with the first two varnas who sometimes have misused their position to harass or oppress the sudras. Such oppression, however, has happened in all the societies of the world in its long history. But in India, this has been more of an exception than the rule. In fact, important religious works like the Mahabharata (vide Vanaparva 181.20-26) have declared that the brahmin-hood depends not on birth but on the possession of saintly virtues.

Once the basic truth, that diversity is a fact of life brought about by nature, is realised and serious attention is directed towards achieving unity and harmony, co-operation and coordination, in spite of that diversity, so that all human beings can live in peace, the problem stands dissolved. The Hindu seers had foreseen the need for such efforts. They were apprehensive of the possibilities of the first varna misusing its privileges and status. That is why attempts had been made to offset such tendencies by prescribing that a brahmana could take food in the house of a sudra who was serving him in some form (vide Manu smrti 6.253; Yajnavalkya smrti 1.166; Parasara smrti 11.19).

More than everything else, the Sudras had never been denied spiritual knowledge and wisdom, which was the birthright of every human being. There have been many great saints from among the Sudras and even from the untouchables as illustrated by Valmiki, Vyasa, Dharmavyadha, Vidura, Nandandr, Raidas, Kanakadasa, Tiruppan Alvar and a host of others who are being highly venerated even now, by all sections of the Hindu society.

One more fact may be noted here. Is it not rather remarkable that the brahmanas, even though they had neither the military power, nor the economic power, were respected and obeyed for over five thousand years by the Hindu society? Could it be for any other factor than their devotion to satya and dharma (truth and righteousness), to their sublime character? Is it not equally noteworthy that in the dharmagastras (scriptural works dealing with the conduct of people) they composed, they have voluntarily bound themselves with more stringent rules than they have prescribed for others?

It is nevertheless, an undeniable fact that the caste system as it obtains today has very little in common with the original spirit of the vama system. The evils generated, including the animosity amongst the people of various castes seem to far outweigh the advantages. The Hindu society in this post-independence era, characterised by tremendous advancement in science and technology, throwing open all professions to all persons, is absolutely free to bring about healthy changes. The fact has been well recognised by the ancient sages who composed the smrtis and dharma-sastras that when people dislike a custom or a social system they can give it up and substitute it by better ones (vide Manu smrti 4.176; Yajnavalkya smrti 1.156).

In spite of its several shortcomings and even aberrations, if the caste system based solely on birth, has survived for five to six thousand years, there must undoubtedly be something good in it. Perhaps, the psychological sense of belonging to a recognised social group and the consequent security it has offered may be the main reasons for the same. Hence, it is much wiser to attempt reforming it or even replace it with a better system than totally uprooting it, or, substituting it with a worse system like the one based on the power of money or ethnic differences or political patronage.

It may be useful to remember here the declaration of Swami Vivekananda, the great prophet of modern India, that the giving of good education which includes culture, will go a long way in the levelling up of the society.

SECONDARY CREATION-FURTHER DETAILS

The Sukta goes on to describe further creation by the devas from the Viratpurusa. From his mind emerged the moon. The sun was born out of his eyes. Indra and Agni emanated from his face or mouth. So also Vayu (air) came out of his prana (life-force or vital air). Dyuloka or the heaven, bhumi or the earth and antariksa or the intervening space were born respectively out of his head, feet and the navel. Similarly all the other worlds, and their beings were also created.

With this, practically, ends the description of creation from the Puruṣa.

One notable thing in this description is, perhaps, the relationship between the moon and our minds. Since our minds are parts of the cosmic mind and the moon is also a product of that cosmic mind, the influence of the moon on our minds cannot be ruled out. The very word 'lunacy' used as a synonym for insanity (Luna = moon) and the aggravation or subsidence of symptoms with the changing phases of the moon, confirm this.

The human mind has always been interested in knowing how this creation has come about. Since it itself is a product of the created world it can never succeed in knowing this secret. The śruti or the Vedas, are the only authority for knowing it. However, the descriptions given in the Vedas, including the Upanisads, are so variegated that we do not get a clear-cut picture of the same. Neither do the attempts made in the works like the Brahma-sutras to give a coordinated picture, help us much. Hence, the only way of resolving the problem is to concede that the main purpose of the Sruti is to draw our attention to the Creator, (and not to the creation as such which is only a projection from out of himself), the need to know him and the consequent beatitude we attain.

This attainment of beatitude has been expressed in exquisitely enchanting terms by a r̥ṣi in the Purusasakta to inspire and guide the spiritual aspirants.

BLISS OF REALISATION

One of the most important questions discussed by the Hindu philosophical works is the final goal of human life. According to the Vedas and the Vedanta, this goal is moksa or liberation from transmigration. This moksa, according to them, is rediscovering our eternal relationship with that Puruṣa variously called as Paramapurusa, Paramatman, Isvara, Paramesvara, Brahman, Atman and so on. This is possible only through jñana or knowledge which is anubhava or direct experience or realisation and not just intellectual understanding.

The Puruṣa sukta teaches us this fundamental truth by describing the ecstatic experience of realisation of a r̥ṣi and an unequivocal declaration that there is absolutely no other path to immortality than the knowledge or the direct experience of that Puruṣa who is brilliant like the sun and is beyond tamas, darkness of ignorance. Though karma or Vedic rituals have been eulogised and prescribed, they are only aids in the spiritual path and are of secondary importance.

This statement can also serve the purpose of guiding an aspirant in the path of Meditation on the supreme Puruṣa.

SPIRITUAL WISDOM AND SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

Hindu sampradaya or tradition vehemently asserts that all knowledge, especially spiritual wisdom, generally called 'adhyatmavidya', has to be obtained personally from a competent guru or spiritual preceptor. And, who else can be a better guru than the Puruṣa himself? The Purusa-sukta automatically stresses this point when it declares that this wisdom was first taught by the Puruṣa to Dhata (the four faced Brahma, the creator) who taught it to Sakra or Indra. Indra then spread it in all directions through worthy Rishis or sages.

PRIMARY DHARMAS OR DUTIES

Though the Purusa-sukta has accorded primary importance to the description of the Puruṣa and the process of creation, as also to spiritual knowledge, as the sole means of mokṣa or liberation, it has not forgotten to stress the significance of performing one's allotted duties in life. While declaring that the devas worshipped the Puruṣa through yajna or sacrifice, the Sukta has also proclaimed that these dharmas became the primary or the cardinal ones contributing to the sustenance of the world. This statement needs a little amplification.

The devas had been allotted the task of secondary creation by the Puruṣa, who had also supplied them, the raw-material, in the form of the Virat. They used this raw-material, performed the manasa-yajna or mental sacrifice and completed the task of creation as allotted to them. It goes to their credit that they found out their respective duties and performed them with single-minded devotion. This itself became their worship of the Puruṣa.

This has a great lesson for us, the human beings. God has given us a ready-made world. It is well-regulated by the cosmic laws. Even the gods worked-and are still working-within the ambit of these laws, for the good of the whole world. A yajna, in spirit, means just this, offering the individual good into the cosmic or the universal good, by performing one's duties to the best of one's ability and always keeping in mind the cosmic good.

The day the devas performed the very first manasa-yajna or mental sacrifice, that very day were born the 'prathama-dharmas' or the first karmas, which became a model to the human beings after creation. The Bhagavadgita (3.9-16) describes the jagaccakra or the universal cycle in which all beings and things are linked with one another, because of which the world runs smoothly. If each person performs his svadharma or allotted duty, not only does the world run smoothly but also that very svadharma-karma becomes a worship of the Lord leading to siddhi or spiritual fulfilment.

ATTAINMENT OF HEAVEN

Being full of desires as they are, the human beings aspire for the attainment of heaven after death. The Hindu Scriptures do contain plenty of references to such higher lokas or abodes, of which the svargaloka is the one most sought after. The Purusasukta also refers to this as Naka, the world free from all sorrow, the heaven, where the ancient devas and sadhyas live and to where the noble ones who contemplate on the Puruṣa, go. Then there are others too, who wish to attain the status of the Prajapatis (pro-genitors or secondary creators) like Marici, Atri and others.

However the main stress of the Sukta is on mukti or liberation through the knowledge of Puruṣa.

OBEISANCE AND PRAYERS

The Sukta ends with an obeisance to the self-luminous Puruṣa by the gods who also declare their subservience to any person who succeeds in knowing that Puruṣa.

The hymn closes with a beautiful description of the Puruṣa, as identified with Narayana, with his two consorts, Hri and Laksmi. Day and night are his lateral limbs. The stars (along with the moon) form his body as it were. Heaven and earth seem like the two halves of his open mouth.

Generally, Bhudevi (the earth) and Sridevi (Laksmi, the goddess of wealth) are projected as the two consorts of Vishnu-Narayana whereas here Sri has been replaced by Hri. Hri is the goddess of modesty. It is to impress upon us, perhaps, that wealth, beauty and other embellishments, if not controlled or tempered by Hri or modesty, will lead to disaster, that these two have been stated together.

The Sukta concludes with a prayer to the Puruṣa to give the supplicant all objects of pleasure and happiness, here and hereafter, as also the knowledge of the Self

Finis

To sum up, the Purusa sukta gives us in a capsule form, the philosophy of not only the Vedas and the Vedanta, but also of the Bhagavadgita, giving equal importance to *upāsana* (meditation), *jñāna* (knowledge), *bhakti* (devotion) and *dharma* or *karma* (rituals and performance of one's duties). No wonder then that it is highly venerated and extensively used even today in all our religious observances.